

taken. Grasshoppers, blowflies and houseflies, put alive into the cage would be caught with remarkable dexterity and often nothing would be left except the wings, although in the case of the larger grasshoppers the legs and part of the skin would also be rejected probably because they were too hard. Certain moths, various kinds of insect grubs, and even spiders, are taken if offered; from which we might infer that small as the animal is, it is distinctly to be classed as a friend of the agriculturist.

A Mundarda was presented by Miss J. Brittain, of Scarborough, on March 27, 1939. At that time I thought that Miss Brittain was presenting merely a healthy well-nourished specimen, but a fortnight later when the animal was being examined we noticed a tiny brownish tail projecting from the pouch. A closer examination there revealed that the little mother had no less than six young in her pouch, the animals being about the size of a small pea. Four days later the young were considerably larger, three of them being outside the pouch probably because they could not squeeze in. They were still naked but the hair was beginning to grow on their bodies. On April 22, a week later, the body was completely covered with bluish-grey fur, the animals had grown considerably but the eyes were still closed. On April 24 one venturesome youngster, with eyes open had wandered from the nest and was exploring the cage. On April 29 all had their eyes open and were active. This necessitated more roomy quarters, so the mother and her family were transferred to a large case fitted with two branches and with a box, inside which the mother made a cosy nest of cotton wool and teased rope. During the day the family was generally asleep, but by five o'clock one or more were roaming about the cage. When night had fallen they became busy hunting the live insects provided, and exhibiting marvellous feats of agility, climbing about the branches after the grasshoppers, which they captured with great dexterity. On such occasions full use is made of the long slender tail, by which the animal will hang when reaching from one branch to another. Unfortunately the animals died during the following Christmas holidays as the result of an accident.

A JEWEL BEETLE OF THE FLOODED GUM

(*Mclobasis sexplagiata*)

By R. P. McMILLAN, "Glendearg," Bejoording

In practically every flooded gum (*Eucalyptus rudis*) examined, I have cut out from the bark a very beautiful little jewel beetle known as *Mclobasis sexplagiata* Laporte and Gory, 1837.

The following description may help to identify the beetle: Head golden, in some cases it may be a fiery copper. Thorax, coppery, the sides giving off golden-green reflections. Elytra, violet, with green and golden reflections. An elongate spot below the scutellum. A spot on each shoulder. Two narrow bands of fiery copper on each elytron, one situated a little above the middle, the other midway between it and the apex; neither of these bands touches the

suture, and the lateral margins between the shoulders and the first band are of the same colour. Underside, golden green and in some cases it may be violet. Legs and antennae cyaneous, the basal joint of the latter green.

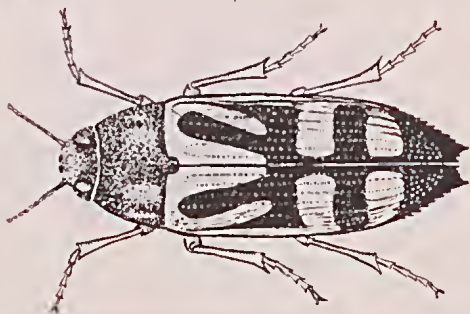
I have cut this beetle out of flooded gums from places as far apart as Mandurah, the vicinity of Perth, Northam, Toodyay, Quairading and Tammin, I have found the beetle in practically every tree examined, which may mean that wherever there are flooded gums this beetle will be found.

The only way I have collected this beetle is by cutting it from its breeding place, the bark of the flooded gum. Apparatus required for this operation is a tommyhawk, a pair of forceps and the necessary collecting jars. Select a gum that has plenty of rough bark. The best place to start the search is on the side away from the prevailing weather. Start chipping into the bark at the same time looking for dead patches in the otherwise healthy bark. The next thing is to explore this patch, for it is here that the larvae and beetles are found. Tunnels formed by the larvae usually run down the tree, and the beetle is usually found at the bottom of these tunnels, with its back to the trunk and head pointing up the tree. Great care should be exercised whilst "chipping", as many of the beetles can be missed and drop into the debris at the base of the tree.

The larvae, which are plentiful as a rule, are found in great numbers in the one spot. When ready to enter the pupal stage they assume a waxy-like appearance. When new the larvae have a distinct blood or black streak down the back. They are quite easy to rear in specimen cases if a little of the dried bark they were found in is placed in the case with them.

The mature beetle remains in the tree from early June till late September, and after that the only specimens left are the victims of a fungus. What puzzles me is that, as far as I know and have been able to determine, this beetle has never been taken alive in a free state. Has any reader had this experience?

What tree or shrub does the free adult visit? Perhaps it may be the highest branches of the eucalypts but I have never succeeded in taking it so far.



Melobasis sexplagiata, x 5. Olive Seymour del.